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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on a: (1) review of recent literature on the principal's role in the implementation of educational reform, and (2) study of teacher perceptions of the role of the principal in the implementation of recent Texas reform legislation. Research on societal and organizational change shows that the inevitability of change should be a part of the school administrator's decision-making process. The multiple responsibilities of change management can be stress-producing, but effective educational administrators have developed leadership skills, personalities, and expertise to cope with the demands of their jobs. Results of a questionnaire distributed to and returned by approximately 60 teachers in 16 small South Texas school districts support the theory that the role of the principal as change agent for educational reform is of singular importance if reform is to be implemented in a smooth and efficient manner. The questionnaire, which is included in the document, gathered specific data regarding four significant variables involved in the principal's role as change agent: (1) promotion of positive attitudes for high teacher morale, (2) effective communication, (3) strong and effective leadership, and (4) efficient and impartial evaluation. A fifth category collected open-ended comments on teachers' perceptions of what the principal's role should actually be. Two pages of references are appended. (IW)

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THE PRINCIPAL AND EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

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Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this study was to research current thought pertaining to the role of the principal in the operation of the local school and to relate this role to the implementation of educational reform. Specifically, the study was designed to examine the principal's role as it related to the implementation of recent Texas reform legislation as these reforms impacted on local public school operation.

Theoretical Framework:

This stud y was based on the theory that the principal is, or should be, the key person in any local school setting in the daily functioning of the educational process. As the leader of the school, the principal's role in the effective implementation of change is of prime importance. Thus the role of the principal as "change agent" for educational reform becomes of singular importance if reform is to be implemented in a smooth and efficient manner. The authors of this study believe that many variables are involved in the principal's role as change agent. Significant factors include:

1. Promotion of positive attitudes for high teacher morale
2. Effective communications
3. Strong and effective leadership
4. Efficient and impartial evaluation strategies

Procedures:

A review of recent literature was conducted to summarize current thought regarding the principal's role in the operation of the local school. Particular emphasis was given by computer search for information regarding the principal's role relating to the implementation of educational reform.

A questionnaire was developed to gather information from active teachers regarding their impressions of their principal's role and actions in the actual implementation of reforms imposed by House Bills 246 and 72. The questionnaire was designed to gather specific data in the four areas of attitudes, communication, instructional leadership, and evaluation. A fifth category called for teacher open-ended comments on individual perceptions of what the principal's role should actually be.

Questionnaires were distributed and returned by approximately sixty teachers from a number of school districts in Texas. Elementary, junior high school and high school teachers were included in the survey. No information was stratified according teacher assignment.

Analysis of data received was a simple percentage tabulation of responses to specific questions and a summarization of teacher comments on the fifth category of the questionnaire.

Results and Conclusions:

Some generalities regarding the principal's role in implementing educational reform are easily discernible. On the other hand, specific questions on teacher perceptions of actual practices by principals reveal a wide range of responses that the authors feel are noteworthy for teacher educators.

Implications for Teacher Education:

It is apparent from the study that teacher educators need to give special emphasis in mid-management courses to the role of the principal as change agent particularly as that role applies to efficient transition in times of educational reform. Teacher morale and, consequently, teacher effectiveness and the effectiveness of the entire school operation may be significantly impacted by the effectiveness of the principal as change agent.

THE PRINCIPAL AND EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

It has been said that change is inevitable; that it is even essential for an organization to survive. The bewildering pace of change constantly confronts us today. There are changes in economy, in technology, in transportation, in communications, in the race for space, and in world supremacy. (Russell,p. 15) Toffler in his book, Future Shock, says that people and groups can become so overwhelmed by change that products, communities, organizations - even our patterns of friendship and love can be affected.

Toffler says:

> Change, roaring through society, widens the gap between the existing images and the reality they are supposed to reflect. When this gap is only moderate, we can cope more or less rationally with change, we can react sanely to new conditions, we have a grip on reality. When this gap grows too wide, however, we find ourselves increasingly unable to cope, we respond inappropriately, we become ineffectual, withdraw or simply panic. At the final extreme, when the gap grows too wide, we suffer psychosis - or even death. (Toffler, p. 179)

By endlessly accelerating change without first determining limits, the risk is run of throwing those who cannot tolerate such rapid change into that peculiar state known as "future shock."

Future shock may be defined as the distress, both physical and psychological, that arises from an overload of the human organism's physical adoptive systems and its decision-making processes and change to the point of future shock may be imminent in education today. However, change, properly managed, is one of the agencies which can release man's energies to aid people in becoming effective m and women of action. (Toffler, p. 4)

The need for change has been accepted in business, in industry in our world as a whole. Managers are required to be receptive to change and willing to ex-

perience new behaviors and attitudes. Above all else managers are regarded as change seekers and must recognize that the management of change is their primary function. (Albanese, p. 35)

Student said:

> The pressure is on to increase efficiency and productivity. Implementing necessary change will be management's crucial task in the years ahead, requiring new "change skills." (Student, p. 28)

Changes in education have many implications for the Texas educator and for the principal in the role of implementing successful change strategy in our schools. Some believe that the current level of change will alter education as much as the Gilmer Aiken Act of the 50's or possibly even more. Researchers disagree as to whether today's rapidity of change will continue to increase in the future.

In predicting what education will be like in the next fifty years a writer for U.S. News and World Report predicts computer lessons in kindergarten and graduate degrees for the elderly. Americans will have the opportunity to study a wide range of subjects and learning can easily expand to a lifelong experience. (U.S. News and World Report, A5) One thing is sure, however, --- Change Is Occuring Now; and the inevitability of change should be a part of the school administrators' decision-making process; and it should be planned. (Wick, p. 127) Teacher educators must respond by preparing administrators to face this process in a responsible manner.

Changes in curriculum, instruction materials, administrative organization, methods of financing, and testing must be constantly made to keep the total of education in line with the needs of society. Society today is calling for the current educational change process to include accountability for teachers and administrators with a state wide evaluation procedure to be administered in the Spring of 1986. Advancement up the career ladder depends upon one's evaluation by adminis-

tration, one's use of technical skills involving the T.E.A. Lesson Cycle, the Model of Effective Teaching Practices, Blooms Process Chart for Extended Thinking---to mention only a few. Current tutoring programs, the shift to middle schools, essential elements and all of the legislative changes of H.B. 72 and 246 have been cast upon us. The current teacher could understandably be thinking in terms of Toffler's "future shock."

Managing the change that is so much a part of today's educational process is a primary concern for principals and mid-management staffs. Adaptation to external demands, be it from the legislature, top administration, or the community, requires definite steps of positive action. Developing essential skills to effectively implement and manage change is a major responsibility for teacher education.

Change is a process in itself. Research has shown that planned change can be greatly influenced by human forces. Teachers as well as employees in the business sector tend to support that which they help to create. Research on organizational change is consistent in indicating that followers are more receptive when they participate in planning and implementation of change. (Stogdill, p. 415) Having influence or some decision powers over an innovation which the person "in the trench" must make work can affect both psychological and technical reasoning. If participation is sought as a technique for securing compliance with a predetermined change, those involved will usually develop resentment because they sense that they are being manipulated. When change is forced on people, resistance usually appears regardless of how much sense the actual change makes. (Student, pp. 28-29) It has often been said that "people do not resist change, but they do resent being changed." (Student, p. 29) Having influence upon a decision and having actively participated in a decision that's to take a course of action, can greatly strengthen motivation in making a change process successful.

Student said:

> Participation also gives an individual a greater opportunity to contribute ideas, a fuller understanding of all the facts of the problem being discussed, a clearer definition of objectives, and a sense of responsibility for the success of the decision. (Student, p. 29)

Influence makes work more meaningful and contributes to feelings of well-being. Successful change must be based on favorable attitudes on the part of those whose support determines the success or failure of the change. Familiarity must be present for ideas to become successful. Contrary to the popular adage that "familiarity breeds contempt," familiarity with ideas breeds comfort and acceptance.

Administrators should have the capability to wisely look at the individual, the group, the organization, even the change process itself and determine what part should remain stable and what should be altered. (Albanese, p. 39) Most people are naturally curious and are usually willing to experiment, but most people also have a need for predictability and stability.

Facing the unknown consequences of change can be stress producing. The capacity to cope with and to adapt to changes while still maintaining a unique identity and personality is one of the most prized possessions of an individual. (Albanese, p. 35) At this moment stress level is high in the field of education. New teacher evaluation procedures are being piloted by TEA; principals are trying to become adept in their use and are training their teachers as to what to expect. Tests for teachers are a reality as well as testing of students. All of this, in addition to the daily routine, produces stress.

The effect of involvement in a period of change can depend on several factors including the positive feelings people have about the change; the anxieties it mobilizes within the individual and the group; and the manner in which change is conducted. (Brook, p. 10) The way change is conducted can most often be the most

significant factor in the success or failure of the change process. Stress may really originate with the organization but becomes manifested and blamed upon the mid-manager, the principal in the school situation, because it is this person who is required to fulfill conflicting requirements within too narrow a time span.

The mid-manager is particularly vulnerable when expected to reconcile pressures from above with the resentment from below that often develops. Acting decisively can be very important. It is important that the manager remembers that the human consequences of the proposed change is of vital importance. He must ensure that changes occur with minimal disruption of the well-being, morale, and health of the staff and organization. (Brook, p. 13) Management philosophy and the personality and expertise of the manager administering the change are vital factors relating to the stress of the individual and the organization.

As the mid-manager uses strategies for managing change, an attitude of positive confidence should be evident. All skills of leadership will be needed to successfully implement the change process in a positive, expectant manner. Burns points out that leadership is the quality that brings about the real change that leaders intend. (Burns, p. 414) Burn states:

> The leadership process must be defined...as carrying through from the decision-making stages to the point of concrete changes in people's lives, attitudes, behaviors, institutions. (Burns, p. 414)

When discussing the skills that a principal will need in the role of change agent Maccoby sums it up when he says:

> ...qualities needed will be...a caring, respectful, and responsible attitude; flexibility about people and organizational structure; and a participative approach to management, the willingness to share power. (Maccoby, p. 221)

The person serving in the management or leadership role usually tends to be more tolerant of change and stress than do those serving in a follower position. The principal should keep this fact in mind and remember that because of the leadership position there is usually more access to information enabling a certain prediction of the consequences of change. The teacher or follower does not have the same information unless it is provided by the principal. Rumor, imagination, and speculation usually abound when there is a lack of information and can even lead to grossly inaccurate evaluations of the effects of an announced change. (Stodgill, p. 310) A sharing of information and participative leadership should make the change process much easier.

> Good leaders are trustworthy and sometimes predictable. They make themselves known and their positions clear. (Benis, p. 44) Leaders are reliable and tirelessly persistent. (Bennis, p. 45)

The essential thing in organizational leadership is that the leader's style pulls rather than pushes people on. A pull style of influence works by attracting and energizing people to an exciting vision of the future. It motivates by identification rather than through rewards and punishment. Leaders enroll themselves and others, in a vision of the ideal or proposed change as attainable and worthy. (Bennis, p. 80)

The role of the principal has changed over the years and it is continuing to change with added duties and responsibilities. Not only must the principal be the human relations specialist for the school, but the principal must be the liason between the school, parents, and central administration. Managerial skills are required of principals as they deal with facilities, personnel, budgeting and finance, as well as the day to day running of the school. Evaluative judgments

of teaching expertise are now required. One administrator remarked that the gap between the administrator and the teacher would continue to widen. Only the very skillful principal can keep this from happening; and some widening will be inevitable with current strains, tensions, and changes.

The principal must realize that the teachers professional world is also rapidly changing, and that collective negotiations, teacher rights, and administrator's rights are to be taken into consideration. (Hogen, p. 177) Documentation should be made of each conference and interview.

More than ever before the principal is assuming the role of the instructional leader for the school. This is a challenging and exciting opportunity and probably one of the most dramatic changes in modern education. The principal who functions as a successful change agent and who uses top leadership skills will be able to have a positive influence upon the overall quality of instruction.

The following questionnaire was distributed to a sampling of teachers in 16 small South Texas school districts to determine reactions to the change processes instigated by H.B. 246 and 72. Particular emphasis was placed upon the teacher's perception of the principal as a change agent in implementing the educational reforms of H.B. 246 and 72. Respondents surveyed included 58% elementary teachers, 30% secondary teachers, 4% counselors, 2% special education teachers, 2% athletic directors, and 2% transportation administrators.

QUESTIONNAIRE (Check Appropriate Blanks)
H. B. 246 & 72

Teaching Assignment: Elementary Teacher _____

Secondary Teacher _____

Other _____

I. Attitudes

1. Your principal's attitude toward recent educational reforms is:
positive _____ negative _____ apathetic _____
Comments:

2. Your principal has made an obvious concerted effort to promote positive attitudes in his/her teachers regarding recent educational reforms.
Yes _____ No _____ Comments:

3. Your attitude toward recent educational reforms has been influenced by your principal: positively_____ negatively_____ not at all_____
Comments:

II. Communication

1. Your principal has kept you adequately informed regarding provisions of recent reform legislation:
Yes_____ No_____ Uncertain_____
Comments:

2. Your principal has kept you adequately informed regarding local district procedures in implementing provisions of recent reform legislation:
Yes_____ No_____ Uncertain_____
Comments:

3. Faculty meetings called by your principal to specifically discuss provisions and implementation procedures for recent reform legislation have been:
Too many_____ Too few_____ Non-existent_____ Adequate_____
Comments:

4. Your principal has provided adequate information in writing regarding recent reform legislation both as to pertinent provisions and local implementation procedures: Yes_____ No_____
Comments:

5. Information provided by your principal has been: clear and concise_____, sometime confusing_____, more confusing than clear_____
Comments:

6. Your principal has given you a clear invitation to discuss individually with him/her any area of concern relative to recent educational reform legislation:
Yes_____ No_____
Comments:

7. Your principal makes a systematic effort to inform parents regarding impact provisions of recent reform legislation: Yes_____ No_____
Uncertain_____
Comments:

III. Instructional Leadership

1. Your principal is viewed by his/her teachers as the instructional leader of the school: Yes_____
No_____ Uncertain_____
Comments:

2. Your principal gives directives and/or samples on scheduling, lesson planning, instructional framework, etc.: Yes_____ No_____
Comments:

3. Your principal requires daily lesson plans that include designation of essential elements for each subject taught: Yes_____ No_____
Comments:

4. Lesson plans required by your principal have become more complex and require more time to complete as a result of recent reform legislation: Yes_____
No_____
Comments:

5. Your principal requires all teachers to prepare lesson plans in the same format: Yes_____ No_____
Comments:

6. Your principal encourages you to develop your own "personal management system" in your classroom within the confines prescribed by law and local board policy, i.e., "Do what works for you." Yes_____
No_____ Uncertain_____
Comments:

7. Your principal takes over a class for you and demonstrates teaching techniques: On a systematic schedule_____ Occasionally_____ Never_____
Comments:

8. Your principal visits your classroom: Often enough to know what's going on_____ Seldom_____, Never_____
Comments:

9. Your principal gives you adequate positive reinforcement for your efforts in meeting provisions of recent reform legislation and for doing the essentials of your job: Yes_____ No_____ Uncertain_____
Comments:

10. Your principal makes you feel like a part of a team: Yes_____ No_____
Comments:

IV. Evaluation

1. Your principal has made clear the evaluation provisions prescribed for career ladder purpose: Yes_____ No_____
Comments:

2. Your principal has clearly outlined for you his own methods for evaluation of your performance: Yes_____ No_____
Comments:

3. Your principal is impartial in evaluating his/her teachers for career ladder purposes: Yes_____ No_____ Uncertain_____
Comments:

4. Your principal portrays an attitude of high expectancy when discussing evaluations: Yes_____ No_____ Sometime_____
Comments:

V. What is your view of what a principal's role should be in the implementation of recent reform legislation.

Tabulations included:

I. Attitudes
1. positive 64%, negative 11%, apathetic 19%, apprehensive 2%, undiscernable 2%, NR 2%
2. yes 81%, no 19%
3. positively 55%, negatively 13%, NR 2%

II. Communication

1. yes 68%, no 13%, uncertain 17%, NR 2%
2. yes 72%, no 11%, uncertain 17%
3. too many 17%, too few 34%, non-existent 4%, adequate 36%, NR 2%
4. yes 55%, no 36%, uncertain 2%, NR 7%
5. clear and concise 32%, sometimes confusing 62%, more confusing than clear 4%, NR 2%
6. yes 70%, no 28%, NR 2%
7. yes 38%, no 19%, uncertain 41%

III. Instructional Leadership

1. yes 66%, no 11%, uncertain 21%, NR 2%
2. yes 57%, no 41%, NR 2%
3. yes 66%, no 32%, NR 2%
4. yes 60%, no 30%, uncertain 6%, NR 4%
5. yes 45%, no 49%, uncertain 4%, NR 2%
6. yes 79%, no 13%, uncertain 8%
7. occasionally 4%, never 92%, NR 4%
8. often 47%, seldom 47%, never 2%, NR 4%
9. yes 47%, no 34%, uncertain 19%
10. yes 79%, no 11%, uncertain 2%, sometimes yes, sometimes no 4%, NR 4%

IV. Evaluation

1. yes 51%, no 45%, NR 4%
2. yes 49%, no 47%, NR 4%
3. yes 34%, no 21%, uncertain 41%
4. yes 64%, no 15%, sometimes 9%, NR 12%

V. In answer to the question, "What, in your view should be the principal's role in the implementation of recent reform legislation?", respondents answered:

1. "Serve as a guide."
2. "Be a leader and example. Be concise. Be a motivator."
3. "Be helpful. Give ideas for improvement. Give specific compliments to teachers."
4. "Be informed.: Direct the staff. Be innovative."
5. "Visit classrooms and not on a regular basis. Be open-minded - allow different teachers to use different methods. Make evaluations in light of the situation that is occuring at the time the evaluation is made."
6. "Be more concerned with the staff than with his own appearance of being important."
7. "Be a strong leader - a booster, morale builder, motivator, and change agent."
8. "Make teachers feel at ease."
9. Promote teamwork within the faculty - work collectively. Set clear guidelines and take the guesswork out of what is expected."

10. "Set positive attitudes by example. Set up an assistant system for paperwork. Accept minimal lesson plans especially from teachers with good evaluations."
11. "Be a leader in attitude and implementation. Be knowledgeable about details before making demands on teachers."
12. "Be informative and give specific examples of what teachers should be doing."
13. "Give clear guidelines and examples."
14. "Be supportive of his teachers."
15. "Keep teachers informed of both state and local requirements and assist teachers in implementations."
16. "Be an informer and an instructor to teachers."
17. "Give clear directives."
18. "Get information needed to comply with law. Get input from staff."
19. "Be a good leader and communicator."
20. "Keep teachers aware and make sure teachers are providing the best education possible under guidelines set by law."
21. "Be an over-all leader."
22. "Keep teachers informed, but do not jump to conclusions too fast."
23. "Keep teachers informed of changes and how they will be involved."
24. "Be a leader in making smooth transitions. Be sure legislation interpretation is the same district wide."
25. "Keep teachers informed and ensure that they are complying with law and mandates."
26. "Keep both teachers and the state happy."
27. "Make things as easy as possible for the teacher. Eliminate all unnecessary paperwork. Keep teachers informed. Be positive and optimistic. Set a good example."

Conclusion

The challenge presented to education today is not of the same dimension or intensity as that which was faced in the past. Never before has there been so much to be learned by so many. Commitment to quality and equality of education must be reaffirmed and honored. Imaginative and creative use must be made of the new knowledge and the new technology. This requires important changes. Educators, students, parents, and laymen must be united on the broad purpose of education and must work wisely to select appropriate educational changes that meet the needs of

today's young people. (Webb, pp. 450-451

Successful change is a product of many forces - judgment, knowledge, intelligence, leadership, and vision as well as various psychological forces and factors. The role of the middle manager, or the principal, is especially vulnerable and at the same time vital for successful educational change. Teacher educators are challenged to meet this important need in the preparation and education of middle managers in Texas schools.

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